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Week 36: *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*

Randy Robison and Tammy Trent

James and Betty Robison

Anne Graham Lotz and Rachel Ruth Wright

From 9/5/23

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. My friend and co-host Tammy Trent is with me as always. Have you ever had a near-death experience or somewhere where you at least thought I don't know if I'm getting out of this?

TAMMY: Yes, I actually have. Now that you say that. I was in Australia in a car with Anita, my assistant, traveling at a women's conference. We were on a back road and I remember getting into one lane and seeing a semi-truck coming right at us and we had nowhere to go. And somehow, we wiggled our way out of that, ended up on the side of the road and we both just sat there like—didn't say a thing. [Laughing]

RANDY: In those fast ones, yeah, you don't have time to think. But a lot of situations that we face, especially as we get older, right, you have to contemplate this idea of, as the book says, *Preparing to Meet Jesus*. I think that's part of the reason that this program that we're going to see today with Anne Graham Lotz and her daughter, Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright, lots of names. And there is the Billy Graham name in there too because they're related. But it is something that we all have to confront at some point which is death. None of us likes the idea of confronting death but Christ gives us hope. So I don't know, I think even though it is a hard topic, it is a hopeful topic.

TAMMY: It is hopeful, Randy. And I think it challenges me too with anything in my life. God is at the center of my life. It is something that is incredibly important to me. It is the biggest

priority of my life. For me to know that I'm prepared at any moment, like I know I'm not promised tomorrow but I have today. So the choices I make today, everything I do today matters in preparation to meet my Father one day. I can't wait. But am I fully ready? It is a good challenge.

RANDY: It is a great perspective shift. So I know you're going to be blessed today. Here are Anne Graham Lotz and her daughter Rachel—uth.

Begin video

JAMES: There you go. Well, these two ladies had, in many ways, experienced hell against their bodies. Really, Anne had cancer, and it's a miracle. Her daughter had—tell us what—because you didn't have just one thing coming at you. You had a heart attack.

RACHEL: I had two and it's called SCADS, spontaneous coronary artery dissection, and it's very rare. It can happen to women basically in their 30s or 40s under a high-stress event or like a heart exercise. I went in for a routine stress test and it was terrible. And I walked out with chest pain. I thought it was acid reflux. And four days later, I ended up going to the hospital and having my first heart attack. The next day I had the second one. The artery on the inside just shreds.

JAMES: Now you all have written a book together, *Preparing to Meet Jesus*. Tell me how this all came today because this is a call of God on y'all's life.

ANNE: Yes, it is. I feel like, James, this is the message of the hour. I believe that I'm living in the last generation. I believe Jesus is soon to return. And I believed that since I was a girl. He's given me scriptures that I believe confirm it. And I won't go into all the details of all that but I base my conviction on what he's told me in His Word.

But we're all going to meet Jesus at some point. He'll either be our bridegroom and our savior or he's going to be our judge. You can't avoid that. So when I look at the church, generally

speaking, I see a lot of people asleep. They're not ready to meet Jesus. And they're going to have many, many regrets at that moment. I'm talking about people who have put their faith in Him and they go to church but they're just not ready to meet Him.

And so we wrote this book together and he will—you brought out this Fall will be my fifth checkup for breast cancer, so I faced death when I had that diagnosis. Rachel-Ruth had her two heart attacks a year and a half ago. We almost lost her. I watched her and I knew she was dying. And God pulled her back from that brink.

You never know when you're going to step into eternity, and we need to be ready for that moment. I live my life so that five minutes before I see Jesus I have as few regrets as possible. And if he doesn't come for me in the rapture, I know one day because of my age one day soon, I'm going to step into eternity, I'm going to see him and I don't want to have regrets. And the interesting thing is in the olden days of Jewish culture, in Hebrew culture, the bridegroom would go and make an arrangement with the bride's family and betroth her to him. And they would be married but not living together. And he would go back to his job during that year's interim to prepare a place for her to live in. Her job during that year's interim was to get ready to go and live with him.

So I feel like we're in that interim. Jesus said he's gone to prepare a place for us. He will come again to receive us to himself that where he is we may be also. He's getting the house ready. We need to get ourselves ready. Whether it's through old age, whether it's through a horrible accident, whether it's through disease, whether it's through the rapture, we need to be ready. So Rachel-Ruth teaches an incredible online Bible study. You can find it at AnneGrahamLotz.org.

JAMES: What's it called?

ANNE: It is just Rachel-Ruth—

RACHEL: It's just Rachel-Ruth Bible study. So it is Rachel-Ruth Genesis Bible study. Now I'm going to be teaching Exodus. But you can find it on AnneGrahamLotz.org.

ANNE: And she has 13,000 people from around the world from Russia, from Lebanon, from Africa, and from Australia. And she was teaching through Genesis and teaching this particular passage because the book is based on, you'll have to tell them but Genesis 24, the story of Abraham when he sent his servant, Eliezer to look for a bride for his son, Isaac.

So Rachel-Ruth has gone through and taken principles or characteristics, one at a time, there are 21 of them and found them in Rebecca and the story, and then she's applied them. Each chapter in this book is based on one of those principles or one of those characteristics. And at the end of the chapter, we have a challenge, which is just an application for us, ourselves. And then, when I finished working on that chapter and Rachel-Ruth wrote the chapters, I worked on them, worked on the little challenge, and the prayer that came to my heart and my mind is what I wrote down at the end of that. So I have personal prayers at the end of each one.

But Rachel, tell them about Isaac and Rebekah, and maybe some of the chapters.

JAMES: Let me ask you something, Anne. Were you surprised at what you saw coming on her after she went through this and then started writing and teaching in this way?

ANNE: It did before that. I remember the first time I heard her teaching it was at the Cove for a woman's Christmas thing. It was packed with 450 women, packed in there for their Christmas luncheon. And I went to support her and I got blown away. And when she gave the—

BETTY: Isn't that awesome?

ANNE: Yeah. When she gave the invitation, there were dozens of people, women who stood to receive Christ and she prayed them through. Somehow, I had missed that. I had raised her and somehow, I missed it.

RACHEL: How did that happen?

ANNE: How did that happen? Because she is the one with ADD, she's the one who has a crazy sense of humor, and to see her stand up and preach with power. She was not a teacher, she was a preacher. So our book, our last book had just come out, *Jesus Followers*, which is when her heart attacks happened. And then we wrote this book together.

It's been a journey, James. I'm amazed at what God has allowed her to do and her sensitivity to his spirit, her incredible insights into His Word. You read through it, you won't find anything like this because the insights are so fresh and so spirit-inspired that you'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll be blessed. It's a fabulous story.

JAMES: It looks to me like, by the 21 chapters, it's a three-week, 21-day journey into the fullness of the presence of God. Are you surprised at what he's doing? You didn't know you were going to have a P.R. person that would be this excited about it, did you?

RACHEL: Oh no. It's so sweet. I feel like I am evidence of what the Lord can do with a very weak vessel. Because there is no reason why I should be able to get up and give a message or write a book. I was the student every teacher just dreaded having because I couldn't comprehend, I was raising my hand all the time, I don't understand! And so I feel like God took the least of these and is using me, and I'm baffled by it. Every time I get up to speak or I write a book like I've reread it and I had to do it on the audiobook, and I'm just like how did God do that?

JAMES: You are a miracle! Tell me what you want the book to do, and how you believe God is going to use it.

RACHEL: Well, just looking around at what's happening in our world, it is unreal how everything is melting down, and all these horrible things are happening. And they're going after our children, they're going after truth. Like truth is—they don't want it anywhere. And Christians are getting persecuted and you cannot believe the things that are happening.

And so, we know Jesus is getting ready to come back. And I feel like a lot of believers probably want to tuck away and just wait but we have to prepare ourselves.

JAMES: Be a light set up on the—we've got to be visible. And he's visible in us.

RACHEL: Yes! And so this book hopefully addresses those things where we can search our hearts if there is kindness, if there is humility, if we're even part of God's family. Have we ever given—we may go to church and go to Bible study but do we ever remember a time when we've prayed and asked Jesus to come and live inside?

ANNE: Stop on that one because that was the first characteristic that Abraham gave the servant.

RACHEL: Yeah! Well, it is so sweet. In the story of Abraham, when he asked his servant, "I need you to go find a bride for Isaac. Don't look amongst the Canaanites. I want you to go to my family and find a bride for Isaac." And so the servant does that because that was important. He didn't want a Canaanite who doesn't care about God or anything like that but go back to his family.

And that is such a picture that in order to be a bride, you have to be part of God's family. That's the first characteristic, is to make sure you're part of the family. So we've got to make sure that we have a time in our lives where we've asked Jesus, humbled ourselves, and said, I know I'm a sinner and I want you to come into my life and take away these sins and cover them with your blood and have a right relationship with you.

And then the journey begins, and then you can do the rest of the book because then we can just gently go through piece by piece, do I see this in my life? How can I fix this? And just like when you're getting ready for a wedding. And you're getting ready to get married, you want to look your best and have the dress and hair, all that stuff. That's just for a wedding here on Earth. But to think of getting ready to see Jesus face to face, what can we do to get ready for that moment? I mean it's awesome! I cannot wait! I'm so ready for Heaven. But we can do things to get ready.

JAMES: Did you feel like it turned out to be rather deliberate what we could easily make a day process, is that what you've seen happen?

RACHEL: Yes, yes!

ANNE: They are short chapters so we were saying last night, it is so nice, especially if you're busy, just to have a short chapter that touches on one primary characteristic or principle. And I love the fact that the servant chose, according to the guidelines that Abraham gave him, but he chose Rebekah. But then Rebekah had to choose, we were talking about that this morning.

RACHEL: Well, it's so sweet because when Abraham was asking his servant then the servant said, "Well, that's fine but when I go what if she doesn't want to come with me?"

And he said, "Well, then I don't hold you to this. It's okay. Don't force her, in a sense, and don't take Isaac. I want him to stay here."

And so that's a picture that we're all offered this free gift but it's up to us to choose, do we want to follow? Do we want to—so it is this great beautiful picture of both. We're chosen but are we going to choose?

JAMES: And you know, you are choosing him, you're not choosing a membership. Betty was a church member but she didn't know Jesus.

BETTY: That's true.

JAMES: And she was the sweetest little church member you ever saw.

RACHEL: There are so many like that.

BETTY: But to know now at the age that we are, we're getting, we're considered part of the older generation now. James and I have said over and over again, we want this to be the best season of our life. We want to be closer to him and walk closer in his footsteps than we ever have before. We want to have more zeal and love for what God loves. He loves all of us. And we

want to show that love in the greatest way that we've ever been able to express it.

ANNE: You all do that, Betty. Can I just tell you? I want to encourage you, you're so loving and genuine, and authentic. But I think there are a lot of people out there today like you were. So they go to church, they're involved in religion. They don't know a personal relationship.

And the last characteristic that Rachel-Ruth pulled out, which is my favorite, I think, maybe other than the first one about being a member of the Father's family, but the last one is that when the servant took Rebekah and she met Isaac he took her into his mother's tent and he loved her. So it wasn't just an arranged marriage, it wasn't just something that she had to do, it was a love relationship.

And the relationship we have with our heavenly bridegroom is a love relationship. It's not just master and servant, or boss and employer or employee, it's a love relationship. It is our bridegroom who is in love with the bride. And we need, with hearts overflowing with love for him, we want to be ready for that first look. At least I do.

JAMES: See, I'm going to be 80 years old and I have never felt more loved. I mean I feel like his love is so unconditional. It is boundless, it is endless, it is not measurable. It is continually expressed. And it is like he lets me know he's excited that I'm so excited about experiencing his love and then expressing that love. To me, that's what he's praying for.

As I look at these steps and I just read over them, all the things you're talking about are characteristics of somebody that's finding their way into the center of God's will to be a member that's rightly connected to the other members so that you're blessing one another. And then as a body, you're blessing everybody on this planet because they can see him. They can see his body adorned in his glory. Isn't that basically what you're trying to take everybody?

RACHEL: Yes! It is that natural overflow. When we have that time with the Lord and we're honest before him and we get rid of things that we see in our own lives that we don't need there, then not only are we blessed but others around us are.

ANNE: Well, it is the greatest evangelistic tool is just to be somebody who represents Jesus so well that other people want to know him because of what they see in us.

JAMES: You have to be pleased with her countenance. When you live there because you know when I met her, I had not met her in person, and I saw her, she has a radiance. And the whole church can have that radiance. You've always had that desire for God to flow, you want it. But you've got to admit, you're watching a miracle here. Not only the fact that she's alive but that Jesus is living so visibly in her. Can't you see that? I believe we can see it in his whole church if we would come just like you're trying to help us get there.

ANNE: I think that's right. And I think the things that Rachel-Ruth has been through, the pressures, the problems, stress, pain, God has used that to develop what you've just seen, what you see. And I think the church right now is getting ready to go through a time of persecution—it is going through a time of persecution. The things that they are doing are just almost you can't believe. But I think God is going to use that, just like he did in Acts to purify the church so that it becomes what you've said so that we're attractive to the world. Right now, I think the world, so many paint us with the same brush and they despise us because they think we're self-righteous, judgmental, whatever. But you strip all of that away, and you see somebody who is suffering and still with joy on their face and love in their hearts and caring about their neighbor, that is something that—

JAMES: That was the New Testament church in the book of Acts, and it brought down the greatest power that had ever been established on this earth. It came down so that ultimately the power of Jesus could go to everyone, and great births and miracles of things that changed lives and reached millions could happen. I believe right now today, the church dressed up in Jesus, prepared to meet Jesus, adorned in his glory, I honestly believe it's possible that billions of people would come to that Jesus. If they can see that Jesus because the one they think they see or they've never seen, they're not attracted to.

But I believe, I see him in you. Let me just pray for you. Lord, I love this girl. I've got her on my

heart because mom put her on our hearts. And she is a miracle to be alive. And she's got your glory and she's trying to get your church adorned in that glory that she's walking in. Mom's excited about it and should be excited about it. But Lord, we want it to happen to everybody that's listening right now and watching, to really be prepared to meet you and to show people around them how beautiful you are, how magnificent you are. Please, God, let us be an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17. Let us see that prayer answered, in Jesus' name, we pray.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: If you're not prepared, I would invite you to call the telephone number on the screen right now. There is someone there who will pray with you whether it is about end-of-life issues, a crisis you're facing, just a situation you just want someone to walk with you for a little bit, call that prayer line. We are here to pray with you. And if you want this book *Preparing to Meet Jesus* there is a way to get it, Tammy and I think it will bless people.

TAMMY: Yes! For any gift that you're able to give today to this incredible mission, *Christmas Shoes and Smiles*, we're going to send you this book. It will definitely bless you.

RANDY: Request it and watch this because you can really bless someone this year. You can share the love of Jesus in a very practical tangible way. I pray you'll be a part of this. Watch this!

On the mission field

TAMMY: We're so excited to help you.

ANNOUNCER: For nearly two decades friends of *LIFE Outreach International* have made it possible for us to bless thousands of children during the Christmas season through our *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* campaign. Because of their generosity, we have been able to provide shoes for children of impoverished families throughout the world. And for children impacted with cleft lip and palate disorders, we have blessed them with corrective surgeries.

This year we want to do even more. We want to provide surgeries for children who are suffering with various neurological disabilities including spina bifida and hydrocephalus, also known as water on the brain.

Open captions

>> For almost all children who do not have treatment for their hydrocephalus, many will die.

ANNOUNCER: This Christmas season and all year round, the quality of children's lives and in many cases their very lives depend on them receiving corrective neurological surgeries. We need your support to help build a state-of-the-art surgical center so that we can say yes to children and their families who are waiting for lifesaving care.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: What an opportunity! Tammy, I love the *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* every year. Obviously, the shoes are a lot of fun. That shot that you just saw where all the kids are running, they look like they're all on the same soccer team or something, right? But just to be able to give them something simple.

What you don't realize is that it does save lives. Literally, the shoe can save lives because there are a lot of things in the soil, hookworms, and things like that that cause all sorts of problems. I don't know. It seems so simple that it is like, why not? We can do this.

TAMMY: It is a simple act of love. It is a great way to give love and hope and fun to these children. Some of them, Randy, have never even had shoes.

RANDY: No, they haven't. And the way they're built, by the way, I've got one here, they pass these things down. You know, kids, how they outgrow shoes and they pass them along. You can go to certain places around the world and see these shoes for a long time. And you make that

possible. I'm waving a shoe at you.

But listen, the cleft palate surgeries, Tammy, I know you've seen the before and after pictures, what a change! A lifesaving change in these cases.

TAMMY: Totally! Totally lifesaving. And will change their lives forever. When I think it would only take \$500 to change a little kid's life for the rest of his life, that is very little in comparison, and it is totally doable. Some exciting things are happening right now.

RANDY: There are. The \$500 is the average price for a corrective surgery. Once that's done, the child can eat, can breathe. It really is a lifesaver.

But listen, this year, we have such a huge opportunity to go above and beyond the normal blessing that *Christmas Shoes and Smiles* will bring, and that is with the surgical center. I don't know that I can stress how critical this is. We have a location in Uganda but people come from, not only from all over the region but from all over the world for these various neurological issues.

We have people right now doing these but they are overwhelmed. There is more need than they have the capacity for. And this facility performs more surgeries every year than the average hospital here in the United States or Canada or Australia. They are doing the work. They are beautiful, dedicated doctors and nurses and staff there doing the work to save lives. But we want to do more.

Tammy, you were asking before, someone has graciously granted a huge gift, more than half of the \$1.2 million to make this possible. But we need to finish that out.

TAMMY: Incredible! We need \$500,000 immediately to help finish this. The need is great. We get to be a part of it. Look, this is how it breaks down. For \$36 you will provide shoes for ten children. For \$72 you will provide shoes for 20 children. For \$180 you will provide shoes for 50 children. It is an incredible opportunity.

Here is the other one. For \$500, you can do a complete corrective surgery on a child that needs something today—done today. Let's give them a better future. If you can do an extra \$1,000 or more, we're going to put that right toward this new surgical center. That is going to change the lives of more than we could even imagine, Randy.

RANDY: Yeah, well, we talk about Christmas. It is early, I know, but the spirit of Christmas is one of giving and sharing Christ with the world! Emmanuel, God with us. What better way to say God is with you than through the expression of saving a life?

So I hope you will go online. Go to the phone right now. Just listen, look, do what God puts on your heart. Let it be an expression of love. And just know, you will put a smile on a child's face and very possibly save a life.

Video begins

ANNOUNCER: Every day, thousands of lives are lost to a waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, now in its 25th year, you could give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it is too late.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children, a gift of \$48 will help provide for ten, and a gift of \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you the "God's Word for My Day" devotional set. These four seasonal devotionals each contain a daily reading, an encouraging verse, and a thought to ponder for each day of the year.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "His Word is Life" tumbler set. These two 20-ounce stainless steel tumblers, each inscribed with a scripture, will inspire you throughout the

day and help keep your drinks well-insulated while at home or on the go.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and request our beautiful bronze sculpture, "A Cup of Water."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you will be a blessing to someone this year. Let's make Christmas so special, one that they will not forget. Go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can. And don't forget, we're going above and beyond this year with that surgical center. I know we can do it.

Tammy, I know we're not just going to save lives, we're going to impact so many people with the love of Christ.

TAMMY: Totally incredible. And it is exciting to be a part of that. Thank you so much. Look, for any gift that you can give today, request this book. We'll get it right out to you, *Preparing to Meet Jesus*. God bless you and we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.